

We also make college more affordable by passing a bill that cuts the interest rates on subsidized student loans for undergraduates in half over the next 5 years. This is particularly important, also, for Hispanic Americans, since 50 percent of Latinos, undergrads, receive Federal aid affecting some 205,000 students throughout this country.

We are extremely proud to have done that. The interest rates on those loans for those students is essential, that we can lower them to a level where it has a direct impact on the cost of higher education. We also know that tuition has been increasing. No one knows that better than parents and young people that are going to college.

We set America on the path to energy independence by passing a bill that repeals \$14 billion in subsidies to big oil and gas companies and invests those funds, instead, in clean, renewable energy resources and alternative fuels.

This is just the beginning of the work we are going to be doing. I am really pleased.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TAYLOR addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TOOK BACK THEIR GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to lend my voice with all of the people who voted for a change for America, but especially to lend my voice with my fellow new Congressmen, the freshmen. I rise because I believe that we were sent here to pursue an agenda for America, to set our country on a new course, a new course which put the public good at the center of our efforts, a new course which said that politics must be in service to the average citizen.

This past November, the winds of change took on a gale force in American politics. American people took back their government. They sent a loud and clear message that the government was here for them, by them and of them. No more, no big contracts. No more legislation written behind closed doors by and for the special interests, no more whittling away the constitutional rights that we were fighting, and no more bridges built to nowhere. No more rubber-stamp administration.

We are going to have an active and engaged Congress that really believes in the principle of oversight, and no more escalating an oil war that we believe is sacrificing innocent young Americans for no legitimate purpose.

The American people voted in record numbers and demanded that their voices be heard. They wanted their government to respond to their needs, and their needs are not the needs of the big oil companies, the big pharmaceutical companies or the Halliburtons of this world.

American people want a new politics of inclusion, of generosity. The American people want a new politics which says everybody counts and everybody matters. The Democrats heard them.

In record time, 100 hours, we made history by passing a people's agenda. Yes, within 100 hours, minimum-wage workers were able to say that they were getting a raise; within 100 hours, lifesaving research, so that people could have a real chance at a cure for their loved ones and themselves. Within 100 hours, real implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendations, and within the 100 hours we made a real statement about education being affordable for all Americans.

I am proud to be a Member of this new class of freshmen, proud to be a Member of these folks who came here to make a change to put the public interest first. The public interest is a very good idea, and I am very proud to say that I have been a part of it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FRESHMEN 100 HOURS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. SUTTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, there are times when the people of this great Nation need and demand things of their government that politics make it impossible to accomplish. This has been the case far too often throughout the last 12 years. Through the last election, the people of this Nation have demanded that this government reexamine and change our priorities and our direction.

The people have asked us to respond to their hopes and their dreams and their needs. They have asked us to realize that there are good citizens of this Nation, honest people who work hard and play by the rules and who nonetheless struggle and live in poverty and toil in obscurity through no fault of their own.

The people have called us to recognize the equality of opportunity, the basis upon which this Nation was founded, the means of equal access to education, equal chances to go to college. The people have demanded that we never squash the hope of science with the politics of partisan personal gain, that we never play games with

the opportunity to save lives. They know that the minute that this great Nation stops being a beacon of hope and a champion of forward progress for the world, that we become something less than what we are.

The people have demanded that we never allow the concerns of special interests to collide with the public good, that there will come a day when the quality of our time will be judged not only on our ability to pioneer lifesaving drugs but our ability to make them available to all of our citizens.

The people have demanded that when you gather a group of our Nation's leading experts and ask them to take a hard look at what we need to do to keep our people safe and make our Nation stronger, that they take on that charge and honor their commitment, that you do everything necessary to implement their recommendations handed down to you; and the people have demanded that the conduct of our public officials be beyond reproach, that the great balancing act of our democracy rests upon a fulcrum of public trust that is fragile as it is vital.

But for the past 12 years, politics has demanded something different. Between the 104th and 109th Congress, 6,900 rollcall votes were taken, and politics prevailed almost every time.

In the very first few hours of the 110th Congress, the people have had their day. The people compelled us to raise the minimum wage, not politics. The people asked us to work to cut student loan rates in half, not politics. The people led us to expand stem cell research, not politics. Concern for those people made it imperative that we implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission and that we take away the tax breaks for oil companies that have made their profits on the backs of recent American suffering, that we start a process for real meaningful negotiation for prescription drugs, not politics.

The people move us to make immediate changes in the ethical rules that govern this Chamber. Their commitment to a new day in America, and a new day in Congress made it vital that we restore the public trust. We saw the faces and heard the needs of the people we were elected to serve; and in this first 100 hours, we have acted. We have brought in new leadership that recognizes that this was a Nation disconnected with its government, and they have taken immediate and bold steps to reconnect it.

I would be remiss not to commend the leadership's admirable example for the past 2 weeks.

The people were at the heart of what we have done here so far, and the people will be at the heart of the legislative agenda we champion in the days to come.

□ 1230

Mr. Speaker, these past 2 weeks have been times of great change, historic times that herald an era of American

politics unique in its tone and compelling in its vision. You can be sure that this was only the start, and that the people will regain their rightful role in this democracy in the days and years to come.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE PROGRESS FOR AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHANDLER). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I, too, am a new Member of Congress and proud to be part of an institution that has been the cradle of democracy, and very proud to be part of this new class of Republicans and Democrats that came here in the year 2007.

Mr. Speaker, in Vermont, and I think across America, average citizens were somewhat bewildered when they looked at what was happening in Washington. When they saw us go from a record surplus to a record deficit, the only conclusion they could come to was we had lost our way.

When they saw that the drug companies prevailed in actually getting legislation that prohibited price negotiation to get the best price for taxpayers and seniors, they thought America had lost its way.

When they saw that over the course of 9 years, Congress had allowed itself nine pay increases totaling \$31,000, but the minimum wage worker was stuck at \$5.15 an hour, they thought America had lost its way.

When they saw that when major legislation was brought before this body and the vote was extended for 3 or 4 hours in order to arm-twist, persuade people to change their votes, they thought Congress had lost its way.

I believe what this election was about across America was people in Vermont and people in districts from Vermont to California saying that they wanted Congress to start solving problems. What this 100 hours was about was making a down payment to America, where we are trying to give confidence to Americans that this Congress can do the work that needs to be done to improve the lives of average, everyday people. The strength of our democracy has always depended on a strong middle-class and opportunities for people at the low income level who want to climb the ladder of opportunity.

What we have done in this first 100 hours, frankly, working together with

many on the other side of the aisle, is establish that we actually can govern and we can pass legislation that will be meaningful. We have rejected politics as being about finding wedge issues that will divide us so that we can focus on economic issues that can unite us. And this is a beginning, it is not an end.

These first 100 hours, in my view, have been remarkable. We have changed the way Congress does business by enacting ethics reforms; no meals, no free trips, no free travel, and we did this with the support of 68 Republicans.

To return to fiscal responsibility, we adopted pay-as-you-go budgeting. That is going to impose itself on Republicans and Democrats, whether proposing spending increases for programs you favor or tax cuts you might want to advocate for. We did this with the support of 48 Republicans.

To help working families who have really been squeezed as our economy starts widening between those who have and everyone else, we passed cuts in student loan interest rates that will save the average student about \$4,400 over the life of the loan, and we did that with the support of 124 Republicans.

We passed, of course, the first minimum wage increase in 10 years, and that is going to help America's lowest paid workers, and we did that with all the Democrats and the support of 82 Republicans.

And on and on; on stem cell research, on the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, and the commonsense step of ending tax breaks for Big Oil that costs taxpayers \$14 billion, while it increased our dependence on foreign oil and put off the day when we embraced the challenge and obligation all of us know we have, to move towards alternative energy.

What we know is this: America has very severe challenges: Health care, 47 million Americans without it; health care for the Americans that do have it, that they are increasingly finding they can't afford; bringing our troops home from Iraq; restoring our budget to balance; moving in a new direction on energy.

What we know is true is that the only way we are going to solve those problems is if we work together. We are in it together, and it is by working together, as we have in these past 100 hours, that we can make progress for America.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BAIRD). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. STUPAK addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BLUMENAUER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE REST OF THE STORY WITH REGARD TO THE DEMOCRATS' 100 HOURS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for half the time remaining before 2 p.m. as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, as always, I am profoundly pleased and honored to have the privilege to address you on the floor of the House of Representatives here in the United States Congress.

I have had the interesting observation here as I listened to the speakers that come from the other side of the aisle that there is another story, the rest of the story is out there, and a number of things need to be discussed, and one of them is what did we actually do here in the first 100 hours, as was referenced by at least three of the speakers.

In the first 100 hours, the point was made that they kept all of their promises that they would keep within the first 100 hours. We are going to disagree as to how we define that and what the results of it were, and I think it is appropriate in this democratic process that we have that is framed under this constitutional republic that we are, that we talk about and have open dialogue and debate. And that was one of the casualties, I would point out, Mr. Speaker, to this accelerated 100-hour process.

The 100-hour promise was something that sounded good politically. It had a nice ring to it. The bell tolled 100 hours, so therefore the image of accomplishing these things for America was going to get done in 100 hours.

Well, 100 hours can be counted a lot of different ways, and some people would have thought that at midnight, December 31, when you heard the band strike up Auld Lang Syne, then the 100 hours would begin and this harder working than ever Congress and more ethical than ever Congress and more open and more democratic than ever Congress was going to go to work, and in the first 4 days and 4 hours would accomplish these things.

No, I did not actually make that point either, Mr. Speaker. I think it is appropriate for us to have a real legitimate method of keeping track of the 100 hours. If that is going to be the one